

DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE SPECIAL FORCES REGIMENT



**MAJOR
JOHN CLECKNER, SR.**

Inducted November 2010



Major John Edward Cleckner Sr., a native of Ohio, enlisted in the U.S. Army as a private in March of 1957. Initially trained as an Infantry Soldier, Cleckner attended Airborne School, where he was the honor graduate of his class. He was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division (where he would serve a large portion of his military career) as a radio operator in the 325th Airborne Battle Group. Cleckner went on to serve as a sergeant in the newly formed 3rd Special Forces Group before being selected for Infantry Officer Candidate's School. Cleckner was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Infantry on January 15, 1966, eventually serving as commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 508th Airborne Infantry, operations officer for the 1st Battalion, 504th Airborne Infantry Battalion, and operations officer for the 2nd Battalion, 508th Airborne Infantry Battalion. He also served as operations officer for the 2nd Battalion, 6th United States Infantry, the senior aide-de-camp to the commander of United States Army Berlin, and the XVIII Airborne Corps.

As a Lieutenant, he was assigned to the 5th Special Forces Group, where he was served in B-55 Delta (5th Ranger Company) and was then assigned to Special Forces Operational Detachment B22, where he served as the executive officer at Dong Tre. During the defense of Dong Tre, Cleckner was wounded three times and medically evacuated to Camp Drake, Japan.

His follow-on assignment was to the Special Forces Training Group (Airborne), where he took command of Company A and was promoted to Captain. He later was assigned as the chief of the O&I Committee, where he helped write an O&I Special Forces program and would later prepare a conventional O&I course for the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Ga.

Cleckner was recruited for the Phoenix Program and returned to Vietnam. He was assigned to ODA-102 (5th Special Forces Group) in Tien Phuoc. Upon arrival at the camp, he was informed by his Intelligence Sergeant of a NVA buildup in the area. Cleckner responded by starting a massive program of rebuilding the camp defenses. He also increased the camp's combat operations and intelligence efforts and requested the Navy's Seabees help to rebuild the camp's C-123 dirt runway. On 23 February 1969, Tien Phuoc came under siege by an NVA heavy-weapons regiment. The siege of the Tien Phuoc Special Forces Camp lasted nearly five months (through 15 July 1969), and the camp held. Later, I Corps G2 confirmed that three NVA divisions had moved through the area during the siege to attack the coastal industrial areas of An Hoa, Tam Ky and Chu Lai. Following the siege of the camp, Cleckner was awarded his third Purple Heart Medal and named the 5th Special Forces Group briefing officer by the 5th Special Forces Group commander, Colonel Rheault.

Following a tour with the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Cleckner was medically retired in June 1979. Since his retirement, he has championed the rights of wounded veterans and has been actively involved in the Special Forces Association, where he is currently on his second term as President of Chapter 89. He is also a member of the working group to reorganize the SFA, and he serves as a representative for Region 8.

His decorations include: Soldiers Medal for Heroism; Bronze Star Medal for Valor; Bronze Star Medal for Meritorious Service; Purple Heart Medal with 2nd Oak Leaf Cluster; Air Medal; Army Commendation Medal; Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with two Silver Stars for Heroism; Good Conduct Medal; National Defense Service Medal; Army of Occupation Medal for Berlin, Germany, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal with Bronze Star; Armed Forces Reserve Medal; Vietnam Honor Medal; Vietnam Service Medal with six Campaign Stars; Vietnam Campaign Medal; the Saint Phillip of Neri Medal and the Ohio Medal of Valor. He is authorized the following badges: Combat Infantryman's Badge, Special Forces Tab, American Master Parachutist Wings and the Vietnamese Mas